

used to defray the costs of home school education. In addition to tuition, the money can be used for books, supplies, equipment, tutoring, services for children with special needs, Internet access, et cetera. These accounts are open to taxpayers earning less than \$220,000 a year for couples.

Another option, as I conclude, Mr. Speaker, is the 529 plan. These are tax-deferred educational savings programs that put contributions under management like pension programs. They are often State-sponsored and provide good flexibility. Contributions can be made in a lump sum or in installments, and many States also contribute when a person starts spending that money for a college education. In Michigan, we contribute \$1 for every \$3 deposited.

I would encourage every friend and family member to think about educational savings for their children, their grandchildren, their nephews, their nieces. The expense of college education is daunting, but investing some now will allow for compound interest and growth over time. For example, even with the current low prospects for a return on earnings, saving just \$80 in a month can grow to \$31,000 over the 18 years it takes a child to be ready for college. It is important to get started right away.

Mr. Speaker, education is important. Everybody should be looking at the advantages of saving now.

PERHAPS PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR WILL ANSWER CONGRESS' QUESTIONS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE ON IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, Thursday will be a very historic day. Prime Minister Tony Blair of England will be scheduled to appear in this room before a joint session to make a speech and perhaps receive the Congressional Gold Medal. I understand it is not ready yet so he probably will not get it just now.

It was also in this very same room that President Bush said in his State of the Union speech that "the British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." It turns out that information Mr. Bush had was already understood to be bogus. Our CIA had already told the British that. Yet the President included that fact in his State of the Union message. Apparently, the British indicated they had other information in addition to the crude forgeries indicating that Iraq was trying to buy uranium from Niger.

This has put President Bush in an awkward position. As people in the administration seek to blame one another and now the British and now the French and now the Italians, why and how did this happen?

Mr. Speaker, we have an historic opportunity. In Parliament, the Prime Minister faces MPs and responds directly to their questions. If we had the British system, we could go to Mr. Bush directly to solve this conundrum instead of relying on Ari Fleischer. Perhaps Mr. Blair will be kind enough to allow us the privilege that British MPs enjoy and we can ask him what happened. I really want to know. Don't my colleagues?

When we debated the award for Mr. Blair for the Congressional Gold Medal, I objected. I said it was either too early or too late. Either it should have been done when we did not know what was going on, or now that we have got some real questions, it is too late to give it to him. We have got to solve the question of what happened.

I feel even more strongly now that we ought not to proceed in the absence of answers to our questions. It appears that Mr. Blair may have misled our President or at least our President's speechwriters about whether good information existed indicating that Iraq was in the process of buying the components of nuclear weapons.

This is not a small thing. Perhaps Mr. Blair was responsible for the administration's discredited claim that one of the September 11 hijackers met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague. Perhaps Mr. Blair was the source of the administration's discredited claim that Iraq was buying special aluminum tubes for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. These and many more statements made by Mr. Powell, Mr. Rumsfeld, Dr. Rice, Mr. Fleischer and even the President have been found to be incorrect.

We have not been told why our officials made so many misstatements about Iraq prior to going to war. If our leaders were led astray by the Prime Minister, we surely should not honor them with the Congressional Gold Medal. Of course, we certainly ought not to subcontract our decisions on war and peace to a foreign country's intelligence apparatus. How much we may like Mr. Blair means nothing. We ought to trust our own people.

So maybe the problem is with ourselves. For example, why do we spend \$30 billion on intelligence and yet no one is capable of fact-checking a State of the Union speech? Why have we sacrificed the lives of more than 200 young Americans? We have been told they would protect our country from immediate danger posed by Saddam's barrels of nerve gas and biological toxins and nuclear weapons and al Qaeda and all the rest, but the information was weak, bad and apparently manipulated.

I think the people of Iraq are better off than they were before the United States took out the Saddam Hussein regime, but I am not sure that these Americans who died there were supposed to die to improve the lives of Iraqis. I think they were ready to die to protect their own country, the United States of America, from weap-

ons of mass destruction that threaten our shores and our people.

I am sure that the young people from Britain who have died were similarly protecting their own country.

Perhaps Mr. Blair will answer our questions when he comes to the Chamber on Thursday. Perhaps as Head of State Mr. Blair will take personal responsibility for the errors that pervaded the intelligence he repeatedly cited and not let people who work for him take the blame. Perhaps Mr. Blair will set an example for our own President to follow. That would be worth a Congressional Gold Medal.

HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise again tonight to talk about the high cost of prescription drugs, and I am going to be showing a chart and talking about what I think are some pretty stubborn facts. But before I do, I just want to remind the Members of something that Abraham Lincoln said over 100 years ago: You can fool some of the people some of the time, you can even fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

Earlier, my colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), rose and showed some righteous indignation about some of the kinds of advertising that are going on right now, and they are now saying that somehow if we are in favor of opening up markets to give Americans access to world-class drugs at world-market prices that somehow we are in favor of abortion, which is just a ludicrous argument to make. It says a lot about those groups, and I think my colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), raised some of the questions about the ethics of those groups who are sending out those brochures and running those ads.

I think it is fair to ask where the money really comes from, and I think we all know where the money really comes from, but at the end of the day I think we ought to ask ourselves about the ethics of the pharmaceutical companies, the companies who are actually paying for those ads, the companies who actually develop and sell RU-486.

Why is it that they want to change the subject? Why is it they do not want to talk about the real issue? They want to talk about anything they can except this chart.

The reason is simple. They cannot defend this chart. They cannot even explain this chart. I have asked them to explain this chart. Let me go through some of the numbers on this chart.

These are not somebody else's numbers. This is not some goofball group from Florida. This is not some left wing or right wing extremist. These

are my numbers. Because I went to Germany 2 months ago, and we bought 10 of the most commonly prescribed drugs. The total price in the United States for those same drugs, \$1,389.65. We paid \$373.30 in Munich, Germany. I cannot explain that. They cannot explain that.

We know that, for example, every day Americans consume thousands of tons of imported foods. Last year, we imported 318,000 tons of plantains. We imported \$1.1 billion worth of bananas last year.

□ 2030

Americans gladly consume those bananas. About 40 percent of the orange juice that we consume in the United States now comes from other countries. We are an importer. Markets work. The reason we import is because we can buy those products cheaper in those markets than we can produce them here in the United States. But in many cases we are not talking about products that are produced somewhere else. Many of these products are produced here. But we are talking about products produced in FDA-approved facilities, drugs like Coumadin, which my father takes.

We bought Coumadin in Munich, Germany for \$21. This same Coumadin package in Washington, D.C. sells for \$89.95. Let us talk about ethics. Two years ago this package of drugs in the United States sold for \$64. Nothing has changed. This drug was developed in the 1940s at the University of Wisconsin Veterinarian School. How did it go from \$64 2 years ago to \$89 today? Is that ethical? Is that responsible? Yet they sell it in Germany for \$21.

My colleague talked about Tamoxifen. The American taxpayers paid to develop Tamoxifen. We paid hundreds of millions of your taxpayer dollars to develop Tamoxifen. They sell it in Germany for \$60. A woman suffering from breast cancer here in the United States will pay \$360 for this drug. Is that ethical? Is that responsible? Is that the kind of companies we are dealing with? Go down the list.

We had another example in several of the publications. The drug Taxol, we paid for the development. We took it through phase 2 trials at the NIH, the National Institutes of Health. We paid for all of that, hundreds of millions of dollars; and then the company came along and signed a licensing agreement, and we have gotten royalties back of \$35 million, but the company has had sales of \$9 billion. We got \$35 million for the taxpayers after spending almost \$500 million for developing the drug, and they got \$9 billion in sales.

Let us talk about ethics and being responsible. We had a big debate last year about Enron and the stock holding companies and insider trading. We said this ethics thing has to change. This is one way we change it. We open up markets and hold people accountable, and things will change.

PROPOSED MEDICARE BILLS FALL SHORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I, too, feel the unease of those who spoke before me about the information the President gave us on a reason for going to Iraq. I think it requires investigation. It requires us to know the truth. I do hope when Tony Blair comes on Thursday, we will begin to know the truth.

But in the meanwhile, I want to inform American seniors about the Medicare reform bill that will be considered by the House/Senate conferees. I want to protect and respect our seniors, but I am shocked at the bill the House majority passed by only one vote just over a week ago. Medicare beneficiaries have waited a long time for help; but, unfortunately, the proposed legislation falls short of what seniors and disabled Americans have been waiting for.

We are at a time when we know the miracle of science. Prescription drugs can be miraculous in their power to cure and improve the quality of life of our seniors. We in government have the responsibility to capitalize on the advantages of science and help our seniors. By adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare, a program that seniors know and trust, seniors will have an improved quality of life at a reduced cost to taxpayers over the long term.

A Medicare prescription drug benefit should be affordable, reducing the exorbitant prices of drugs, meaningful with guaranteed benefits, within Medicare, and available to all regardless of where they live.

So it is with great disappointment, Mr. Speaker, that I look at the proposals that were on this floor for Medicare reform. The House Republican bill fails to meet each one of the basic standards. The House bill does nothing to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. It creates a coverage gap so wide that almost 50 percent of seniors will fall into it.

Under the House bill, seniors pay the first \$250 of their drug costs, then 20 percent up to \$2,000. They will receive no assistance at all between \$2,000 and \$4,900. The bill also allows insurers to vary their benefit levels and prices around the country. Insurers will be able to limit access to specific drugs and pharmaceuticals. The House bill fails to guarantee the same benefits for the 9.2 million Medicare beneficiaries in rural communities, and it even prohibits the Secretary of HHS from negotiating a better price for seniors.

The bill that was passed by the House is designed to privatize Medicare, leaving seniors at the mercy of the HMOs and private insurance plans.

This bill uses private drug-only plans to administer the prescription drug program. These are plans that do not exist anywhere today. These plans

could force seniors to leave trusted doctors and hospitals. Even worse, by 2010 the House bill turns the traditional Medicare program into a voucher program.

The Federal Government should provide a safety net for the citizens of America. Unfortunately, the House-passed bill does not include any important fall-back provisions. Under the Senate-passed bill, if at least two private plans fail to enter the market in a region, the Federal Government will step in and offer beneficiaries a Medicare prescription drug benefit. Private plans have not worked in many parts of the country, and over the past 5 years more than 2 million seniors have been abandoned by private HMOs seeking higher profit elsewhere.

I urge my colleagues to recognize this failure and vote accordingly. American seniors, do not be fooled.

CHINA AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Committee on International Relations and the Human Rights Caucus, I rise today to talk about China. I know we in Washington are not talking about China much these days other than China is a great example of economic opportunity for American enterprise, and so it is. But before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus last week, we gathered to hear luminaries like Harry Wu, Chinese dissident, founder of the Laogai Research Foundation, and an even more famous dissident, Way Ting Sheng, a man who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize a half dozen different times, and is known as the Chinese Mandela. They sat in a small congressional hearing room last week and spoke about an astonishing reality in China that I rise to reflect on today. It involves the execution of prisoners on an extraordinary and widespread scale, and the harvest and sale of prisoner human organs; and I am going to speak about what the heartfelt response of the American people ought to be.

It was just 64 years ago that the Nazi propaganda machine flaunted the Olympic Games coming to Munich and used that backdrop of legitimacy to launch the execution of 6 million Jews. In 1980, the Soviet Union touted the decision to have the Olympic Games in Moscow, and on the very eve of those Olympic Games launched its barbarous war against Afghanistan.

Now, as we look at the 2008 Olympic Games headed for Beijing, China, we are reminded of promises by that Communist regime to build eight new stadiums to prepare for the contestants. What they do not say is they have been using the older stadiums to stage sentencing rallies and to publicly condemn prisoners to death. Prisoners are brought to the stadiums, as we learned